

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
NORTH ADAMS**

**INFORMANT: RAYMOND F. BASS
INTERVIEWER: ROBERT GABRIELSKY
DATE: JANUARY 31, 1989
PLACE: IUE LOCAL 200**

**R = RAYMOND
I = INTERVIEWER**

SG-NA-T001

I: This is Robert Gabrielsky, Gabe Gabrielsky uh, interviewing Ray Bass of the International Union of Electrical Worker, Local 200 for the Shifting Gears Project, Changing Meaning Of Work In Massachusetts, at the IUE Local 200 Headquarters on Eagle Street in North Adams, Massachusetts.

I: [Clears throat] Now your name is Ray Bass?

R: Yup, Junior.

I: Ray Bass, Jr. Where are you from?

R: North Adams.

I: Uh, were you always from North Adams?

R: Yes sir! As a matter of fact my family has been on this street for, where I live for a hundred years one way or another. [I: Wow!] It is odd, but uh, there it is.

I: So, so uh, your father is from North Adams [R: yes] and your grandparents?

R: Yes. My mother's side is the, is the long term resident. My father's side came from uh, he called it Kahose. [Pronounces Kahose with a short o] Now they call it Kahose, New York. [Pronounces Kahose with long o] [I: Uh huh] That is my grandfather.

I: Do you remember your grandparents?

R: Uh, my grandfather Bass, yes. My grandfather Whipple was dead. [I: Uh huh] And my grandmother Whipple was alive and my grandmother Bass was dead. One from uh, heart condition the other from cancer.

I: Do you remember uh, [clears throat] what your grandparents did for a living?

R: My grandfather Bass was retired. Uh, he did many things during his lifetime. He was a Teamster with horses.

I: A real Teamster.

R: That is right. [I: Laughs] At the turn of the century my father always told me the story about how my grandfather had beaten the hell out of some guy because that guy was pounding the horse on the head with a hammer. Uh, so that is how I knew he was a Teamster. And I think he got paid, I think my father told me he was getting paid about eight to ten dollars a week, which is (--) Remember I showed you the thing up on the wall there, which is roughly what they were paid in New York City about thirty years before. So North Adams has always been behind the times, even with Teamsters pay. [Chuckles]

I: Uh huh. What, what, what kind of uh, of uh, team did he haul? What kind of stuff did he haul?

R: That I do not know. He may have been you know, haul, whatever, but he was a Teamsters. He you know, drove horses and that is what my father always uh, always reminded me of.

I: When I think of Teamsters I think of Budweiser.

R: Yeah that is right, yeah.

I: As Clidesdales.

R: Of course in those days you know, you are talking you know, turn of the century, perhaps somewhat earlier, because my father was born in 1905. [I: Uh huh] So my grandfather was much older, born obviously earlier than that. And uh, even, I guess my father said even into the twenties horses were common here. [I: Sure, yeah] No problem. They were more common than automobiles.

I: Well I remember them after World War II as a kid in Philadelphia. Um, especially the ragmen used them and the other people used them were the milkmen. [I: Uh huh] Because they used to be able to, the horses would follow them down the street. They did not have to jump back in the truck all the time.

R: [Laughs] Oh yeah! See I do not remember horses uh, being used like that in the street at all.

I: Yeah, yeah.

R: I mean I may have seen them because I was born in forty-six, but it just does not you know, does not stick as a memory.

I: Yeah. Um, and what did your, what did your father do?

R: My father did a lot of things. At the end he was a tool and dye maker [I: Uh huh] at Sprague Electric Company. As a matter of fact I was here, we have his wages here. He was the highest paid worker, one of the two or three highest paid workers in Sprague's as a machinist. [I: Uh huh] And he was making less than four dollars and thirty cents an hour, less than four forty I think. We have it here somewhere.

I: I have had a, I have had technology problems with this tape recorder in the past, so I just want to (tape skips). The other problem I have, I just noticed this from (--) I was on the radio I told you, yesterday morning and [R: yeah] it really bothers me that I stutter. I wish I didn't.

R: Well I, like I said, I mumble and uh [I: laughs] and my tongue sticks to my mouth. It is unbelievable. Except when [I: unclear] you give a (--) When I get excited you know, in front of a big, six hundred people I have no problem [I: right] none at all. It is like I am a clown in the circus. [I: right] I am doing what I am paid for. But uh, and I act like one too. But when I get in front of ten people or two sometimes it is hard. Um, are we going? Oh that is right.

I: Yeah, it is going now. I started it again.

R: [Laughs] Talk about being a clown. Well that is typical.

I: Uh, this is not going to be one central features.

R: Do you want a soda by the way before we go any further?

I: Sure, yeah that would be nice. [Tape shuts off momentarily]

R: Okay.

I: So your father was a tool and dye maker for uh, Sprague.

R: Right.

I: Um, you went to school? Where did you go to school?

R: Uh, right up through North Adams State College locally, everything.

I: Uh huh. So that you went to Drury High School and (--)

R: Drury and Freeman Elementary and then uh, North Adam State.

I: What, when did you (--) And you graduate from North Adam State?

R: 1970.

I: Uh huh. And uh, what, what did you study there?

R: History.

I: Uh huh

R: Actually I studied the teaching of history, [I: Uh huh] which means that I had to take a lot of teaching subjects. [I: Right] Methods courses.

I: That is right.

R: Yeah, all of which were boring.

I: Yeah.

R: Yeah, but somehow my major is gone on paper from the teaching of history to history. [I: Uh huh] I find that interesting, but that is the way it, it is listed on the records now. So you know, (--)

I: It was probably a teacher's college then and you know (--)

R: Oh well it was North Adams State College, but it was still basically a teacher's college.

I: Yeah, and now it is more liberal arts oriented.

R: More business I should think it seems to me.

I: Yeah. Um, what did you think of uh, of your education there?

R: At North Adams State?

I: Yeah.

R: I thought it was interesting. You have got to remember we, I went there in the sixties. [I: Uh huh] Started in sixty-five and got out in seventy, which if you can figure it out [I: laughs] I was uh, you know what I mean, a semester late. It was, it was interesting. You sort of felt that whatever you did you know, you were going to change the world. And obviously it did not work out that way. And maybe all college students feel that way, I don't know.

I: In that period I think.

R: Yeah, it was sort of open ended. I was a little bit more conservative than most. I sort of, I didn't attend classes very well, but I did read the text when it was required. [Chuckles] [I: Uh

huh] So I sort of, I enjoyed it.

I: Um, did um, you tend church?

R: No, not steadily. As a matter of fact I haven't gone in years.

I: Uh huh, uh huh. Uh, what was your first job?

R: You mean steady, or [unclear].

I: Ever. Ever.

R: Summer employee at Sprague Electric Company for \$1.47 an hour in the sample department.

I: When was that?

R: 1965, right out of high school. [I: Uh huh] I hated it. It was boring and I wasn't mature enough to stick to it.

I: Where was it? Where was this? On Brown Street?

R: That was on Marshall Street.

I: Marshall Street. Uh huh.

R: As a matter of fact it was so far on Marshall Street as I recall it was almost at Brown Street. [I: Laughs] Right you know, before that the river [I: right] and it goes almost all the way down to Brown Street and that is where it was.

I: You had a long walk from the gate.

R: Oh yeah! [Laughs] It was an easy job, because we made samples of [few words unclear] and I think your other departments and mailed them out to customers.

I: Made samples of what?

R: Whatever product that Sprague made you made samples. Made sure they were (--)

I: You actually made it from the ground up?

R: Yeah. Well we put you know, pre-fab parts together as I recall.

I: Uh huh. These were capacitors and things?

R: Yes and then sent them out and to a customer. Now it is kind of a crazy (--)

I: So you had like a miniature of the factory right there?

R: Yes. Yeah, yeah.

I: This you found boring?

R: Yes, [I: laughing] because I did not want to work you know? I mean that was the first time I had spent summer not doing exactly what I wanted to do.

I: It sounds like it beats an assembly line. [Few words unclear] [Laughs]

R: Yeah, but when you get an assembly line once you get used to the job you are not there.

I: Yeah, yeah, you could be anywhere. Right, sure.

R: Your, you know your mind is elsewhere. But this thing, you work on it for an hour and then you work on it for two hours and then you know. It sounds interesting, but it wasn't to me.

I: Uh huh.

R: I wanted something that I could do without thinking a great deal about so I could think of what I wanted to. You know, do what I wanted to and it just didn't work.

I: Uh huh. That was right out of high school?

R: Yup.

I: You didn't, you didn't have any sort of jobs in high school or before?

R: No, no, not at all.

I: No. What did you think of high school?

R: Oh I didn't like it. [I: Uh huh] I am not a very friendly person and as a consequence I didn't, I didn't like it. I am not too sociable and I wasn't in high school either. [Chuckles]

I: How does one become a union officer and not be sociable?

R: Um, I have never been elected because people like me. I think that I have been elected in spite of the fact that the people know me. I think that either sometimes people don't want the job, it is not worth it, and I perhaps I think that I am competent. [I: Uh huh] And I have got a big, I have got a big mouth. And uh, I use it. [I: Uh huh] So it seems to work, so far. All but once.

I: So okay, so you worked for Sprague Electric when you first got out of high school. Uh, then did you have summer jobs then in college regularly?

R: Well that was my summer job.

I: So every summer you worked at Sprague.

R: Every summer I worked for Sprague, that's right.

I: Did you do the same thing? Were you the sample maker?

R: No, I went (--) No, they didn't want me back in the sample department. [I: Laughs] That's true! Then the next year I was running a machine called the [Hoirais?]. It was the, we have one now on Brown Street, it was the older version. And again I wasn't, I didn't pay attention to what I was suppose to be doing and I ran it terribly. I was out because I was hurt for a few weeks during the summer. When I went back they told me I was laid off. As far as I know I am the only person ever to be laid off from a summer job at Sprague Electric Company. I get, they gave me another one washing windows. [I: Uh huh] That was a little bit more fun. It was outdoors and you know, not very difficult, so. Most of it was outdoors. Sometimes it was in. They use to have a crew go around cleaning windows every summer. It was interesting.

I: [Laughs] Uh, [long pause] so then when you graduated when did you, when exactly did you graduate from college? Was it in the fall semester, or spring semester?

R: Well I was all done in January of 1970.

I: Uh huh. Then what did you do?

R: And profectively I was done student teaching in December, but I was completed in January.

I: Uh huh. Then what did you do?

R: Uh, I laid around for seven months. Um, then I got a job as a permanent substitute at Pittsfield High School. [I: Uh huh] And I was just a fill-in for various teachers. If I got into an area of my so called expertise which would be history then I was expected to teach. I did most of the time. Although the one time I didn't the head of the department you know, wanted to know why I wasn't doing [unclear]. I didn't have the book in front of me. But uh, it was interesting. I enjoyed that. [I: Yeah?] Some of it was baby-sitting, some of it was okay. And most of it was baby-sitting frankly, but when I got into a class that was teaching history, especially American History, because I student taught that a few months before [I: right], then I, I got into it. I winged it because I had no preparation. I never knew when I got in day to day [I: Right] who I would uh, (--)

I: Where you were in the book and whatever.

R: That's right. I met some interesting people though. There was a man called Mr. Brophy who was uh, I imagine he is gone now, he was, he wasn't a young man. But you know, my name is, my name is Bass and he thought I was, was Jewish. And he was sitting there

asking me and I went, I was watching him, he was leading up to it. And I wanted to see how the hell is he going to ask me? I don't happen to be, but I am waiting you know. [I: comment unclear] No, no, not at all, but he wanted to be very careful because he wanted to know who I was so we could have a conversation. No, no, even though he was Irish, he wasn't. I am Irish too that is why I could say that. And he finally asked me if I was Hebrew. And I said, no, I am not. I happen to be an Episcopalian. [I: laughs] But it was you know, it was funny. He was a nice man, very knowledgeable. Mr. Brophy, one of the nicest people I have ever met. I just wanted to get that on the record just for the hell of it. I hadn't said that in twenty years.

I: He was, was as a teacher at Pittsfield?

R: Yup, he taught history. You know, I gravitated toward, you know, in his teacher's room, those people.

I: And how long did you do that?

R: Just for a year.

I: Just for a year.

R: Yup, and then I got a teaching job at St. Rose of Lima Elementary School.

I: Okay. It is a parochial school?

R: Yes.

I: Where was that?

R: Uh, Littleton, New Hampshire.

I: Uh huh.

R: It is fairly large for (--) I think it is about five thousand people up in, up there. And uh, (--)

I: Where is that close to?

R: Well St. Johnsbury, Vermont is twenty miles to the west.

I: Uh huh, okay. That is pretty far up.

R: About a hundred and seventy miles. But I don't know how far it is from the boarder. Figure eighty to a hundred, you know.

I: Yeah, yeah.

R: And the, as a matter of fact the diner was closed a 5:00.

I: 5 P.M.?

R: 5 P.M. I am serious! Now that is my recollection. It could have been six, but as far as I know it was five. But I enjoyed that. But they wanted a disciplinarian and despite my loud voice and whatever, I'm not, I wasn't a disciplinarian. So I wasn't re-hired. [I: Uh huh] I could say that I, there was a mutual parting of the ways and in some ways it was, but basically I wasn't re-hired because they didn't appreciate the fact that I was not a disciplinarian. [I: Uh huh] So.

I: And so then what happened? [R: Then I] That is 72' then?

R: Uh, yeah roughly. Then I came back to Sprague, uh, to North Adams and I worked (--) Let me see. I didn't work at Sprague's right away. I worked at uh, Waverly Fabrics for about a year. And I quit there. Instead of going to the union I told the boss, he yelled at me I just said, no, you know, I yelled back, don't do that. And he sent somebody over to me and said uh, you do that again you are fired. And instead of going to the union, cause I didn't, even though my father had been president of his union for fifteen years, it didn't dawn on me to go to the union. Um, I gave them my notice. I said, the hell with you, I don't need to take that crap and walked out. Then I worked at General Photo for awhile. And twelve hour days and I was hired for eight and getting paid a piton. So, and I said you know, when is twelve hour day crap going to stop? You know I don't mind working for a living and the job was fairly interesting, but I didn't want to work twelve hours a day because I didn't, I wanted to live. I think it was six days a week too. And he said, well you either work uh, twelve hours a day or get the hell out. So I said good-bye! [Laughs] And I collected unemployment. I don't know how I did it, but uh, I thought I was being treated unfairly. I don't know if I was, but I felt it at the time. And then I went to Sprague's for a year I figured. Then I would go out and get a teaching job. And I have been there ever since.

I: Uh huh. Um, what, what drew you away from teaching? I mean you, you lost this job or (--)

R: No, I lost it. There is no question, I lost it.

I: Up at, up at uh, in New Hampshire. Uh, and uh, what made you decide not to try to pursue a career in teaching?

R: I wasn't terribly interested in teaching. [I: Uh huh] I didn't know enough. As a matter of fact I read more history after I graduated. [I: Yes] You know, you [comment unclear] than when I was in school. I mean when I, I went through college, I took history. I did, obviously in high school you don't major in history, but we took some courses and nowhere at all do you study religion. I mean how can you possibly? Do you know what I am saying? [I: Right] So I went through that period. I read the bible and the Koran and the rest. And um, not the rest, but some of the rest. And I read a lot of translations, because I don't know any foreign languages, not even Latin. But I did a lot of reading there, but I didn't, I wasn't really qualified to teach. I didn't want to teach and it was difficult to get a teaching job anyways. They were sort of all you know, they are gone. Because that is not (--) I don't want to criticize history teachers as a what do you call this? As a specie, but they, they don't necessarily

seem to have the best people there. It is a job you hang on to. It sort of is like a gravy job or stepping stone.

I: Either that, or you don't like it here? A stepping stone. People who want to get into administration or something.

R: Yeah, yeah. That's right, that's right. It is just, people don't give up those kinds of teaching positions.

I: Right, right. Umhm.

R: Maybe that is a self-serving assessment, but uh, I didn't think there were many openings so I just decided to (--)

I: So you worked for Waverly Fabrics. What did you do there? How long did you (--)

R: I was in the sample department there too! [Laughs] I cut samples of cloth out. It was a big, big long thing and you get this thing and you cut squares out. And then they paste them onto a thing and they'd go out to customers. [I: Yeah, umhm. So they'd have like a sample board so you could see different fabric cuts]. Yeah, yeah right. And we would cut them various sizes, you know.

I: Right, umhm. Um, and how long were you there?

R: About a year I think.

I: Uh huh. And then you were at this General Photo?

R: General Photo, but not for very long.

I: Where is that? Where is that?

R: That is in Williamstown. That still exists I think.

I: That is the union shop.

R: That's, oh what do they call it now? It is an IUE shop now too. Um, Fred Shay is president. He is a good union man.

I: Oh I think Maynard told me about this place.

R: Yup. Um, they changed it. It was just bought too. It's on Wat (--) Not Water Street. That is General Cable, or [unclear] Cable. [Photek ?] Don't they call it that? [Photek ?]

I: Something like that, yeah.

R: Yeah. That is on Spring Street.

I: I know what you mean, yeah. Um (--)

R: But that was non-union at that point.

I: What did you, what did you do for them?

R: I did something. Ran this thing around and a red light to, most of the time a red light, not all the time, I guess basically it would (--) In this, using Sprague terminology we sort of impregnated the film you know. [I: Uh huh] Did something to it, or emulsed it or whatever. See, in Sprague's you impregnate anything, you put charges or something in there, you know, you run it through impregnation. Then here I guess they made it into to film I guess.

I: Right, uh huh.

R: And it was, I enjoyed that. It was different. It was interesting, but it didn't last too long.

I: A lot of chemicals?

R: Yeah, yeah, but it wasn't, no odor or anything. It seemed to be very well run.

I: Uh huh, uh huh. Um, [long pause] so then when did you, when do you go back to Sprague's, Sprague fulltime?

R: Well, I was out of work after, after uh, oh what did I just say? General Photo. [I: Yeah] Had been looking for work, there seemed to be none available at the time. Um, and I didn't know what to do. And unbeknownst to me my father called up one of the people he knew at Sprague's who are Welsh, near Welsh who was a bigshot. And my father knew him through his union activities and said what the hell is wrong with the Bass name? You know, what is it? You don't want to hire him, you know? And I, I had applied several times, but they said I was over qualified. I don't know whether that means that they didn't want me there or whatever. But he called up and the next day I got called up and all of a sudden, you know, I got called and all of a sudden I was qualified. [I: laughs] You know, so uh, my father (--) Yeah.

I: Qualified to do what?

R: I was the coil winder. The worst job in Sprague Electric Company. It was taking ceramic (--)

I: Sounds like resistors.

R: Well let me explain. Yeah, in several ways. It was a ceramic donut and you wound wire around it varying thicknesses and you just simply put one end through it and it wounded. And nobody made those.

I: It is a, it is a resistor, right?

R: I guess so. I, you know, I don't know anything. Electronics. [I: laughs] I know the union business hopefully, but the rest of that stuff you know, I would have majored in that you know, if it was important to me. And uh, but it [I: comment unclear] basically, yeah, it filters out electronic interference. [I: Yeah, right] When you throw electricity through a wire it goes into a box, it creates a field of its own. These things are filtered out somehow. And I was a coil winder and nobody made any money on it and they expected me to quit, but at that point I had not held a job basically my entire life for more than a year. So I said, the hell with them and the hell with everything, I am going to make it. So I made it. I was I guess basically the second person in several years to make bonus. I didn't make as much as the one guy who was, because he was excellent. [I: Uh huh] But I did make it.

I: So there were two of you winding coils there, two men?

R: Well, two steady and then there were several others that came and went, you know. Cause it was, it would beat your fingers up. The first two or three weeks, two weeks I had the job it was accumulative affect to. I mean you know, it was like somebody hitting your hands all day. [makes sounds of slapping hand] But I had (--)

I: I can see where you had these real tiny wires that you (--)

R: No, they were thick. [I: Uh huh] Um, from occasionally eleven gauge wire up to twenty-three.

I: Twenty-three is pretty small.

R: Yeah, but we didn't use it very often. Mostly it was fifteen. [I: Uh huh] Twelve to fifteen, well twelve to seventeen, but you just keep banging your hand against it you see? [I: Yeah] And it would keep beating it. And uh, I had to hold my hands above my shoulder, basically above my heart or they would throb. I did that for two weeks.

I: No gloves? Cause you couldn't wear gloves.

R: No, no. I can't. Others did, but I couldn't. And uh, although we did use tape. And then finally they just toughened up and I was home free. [I: Uh huh] Coil winder. [I: Uh huh] I could still do the job.

I: Was that, was that considered a man's job, or a woman's job?

R: Yes. They're, in Sprague's there are C coded jobs, A coded jobs and B code, B code being clerical. A code is basically light duty, clean. And C code is heavy duty, dirty. Anybody can choose it, men, women and whatever, but they are rated to let people know. There is a history behind that too. [I: Uh huh] But after the strike of course there were thousands that hadn't been called back. And they didn't want women to be called these admittedly terrible jobs, impregnation, or whatever and say no, I don't want to do that and lose their recall rights. [I:

Right] If they go (--) Actually what would happen was, they would call this woman with forty years, or thirty years seniority and they would say, do you want to do impregnation? They say, what are you, crazy? So they would put her down on the bottom of the list. [I: Uh huh] Well there is three thousand people you know, and she would never get called back. [I: Right] So they worked it out with the company and the union I guess in 1970 after the strike and they come up with this code system. And it has been approved by the government as well. The only change the government has made in it is on the posting system they mark, "women are encouraged to bid this job". C code. [I: Uh huh] You know, and that lets them know that they can bid it. We already know that anyways.

I: But that, but it is, it would be heavier work?

R: Yes, and there is generally some, it paid somewhat higher.

I: Right, right.

R: But, and there is a difference between the average male excluding maintenance, okay, because that is (--) Well know, even including that there is a difference between the average male wage and female wage, but it is very small. I figured it out once. I don't remember what it was. It was something like ten or fifteen cents, that's all.

I: Are there women in the skilled trades in maintenance, in apprenticeship?

R: Not a one. Not a one. Never had been. Not even applied though.

I: Um, so that was, that was your first job at uh, your first regular job at uh, oh, at Sprague was be a coil winder?

R: Till 1985 it was the only job I held.

I: Uh huh. Well that was sort of [R: seven years] yeah, it was quite a, quite a long time on that. And your (--)

R: Well alot of that was union anyway.

I: And your day was mostly, was pulling the wires and watching them?

R: Well when I was, when I finally ran for union office of course I didn't do it that much. But yeah, but when your hands were used to it there was nothing to it. I mean you virtually didn't pay attention to the job. You would sit in the production line and talk to everybody else. It's enjoyable.

I: Um, what (--) What first made you get interested in union activity?

R: Well, I don't remember the incident, but let's, let's go to my background. My father was president of his union for fifteen years, a machinist union. My uncle was Charlie Bass. You

must have read the history of the ICW? [I: Umhm] He was I think at one point chairman of the grievance committee. [I: Right, right]
That was my uncle. My mother was a steward in the ICW and the IUE for a number of years.
My aunt (--)

I: Your mother was a steward?

R: Yeah. Yeah, she was a check inspector and she was the steward there. [I: Uh huh] My aunt was chief steward for a number of years. My Uncle Art who worked at Hunter out at [unclear] was involved in the union. My father was involved in the union when he worked at Arnold Print Works years before. [I: So] [R: comment unclear, both speaking at same time]

I: Oh your father worked at Arnold Print Work?

R: Yeah, back in the forties. [I: Uh huh] In the thirties, whatever. And (--)

I: Is your father, is your father alive?

R: No, he died in 1979. [I: Uh huh] And um, so it was just natural. And we had a steward that I didn't think was doing a terribly good job. I don't know if I did much better, but I said the hell with it. And there hadn't been an election in a year, so I said I want an election. In the IUE you have an election once a year.

I: So you were elected steward? [R: Yeah] You ran for (--). [R: And got elected] Uh huh.
Uh, had you gone to union meetings before this at all, or (--)

R: No. [I: No] Who goes to union meetings? Do you know what I mean? I bitched like hell about people not going to union meetings, but I didn't go before I became a steward. [I: Uh huh] Never paid attention to the posting, not at all. [I: Uh huh] Never went.

I: Um, then uh, so you ran, you ran for election. Where were the uh, elections held? Were they held in the union hall, or (--)

R: No, no not for a steward election. However, well on the whole every election we have it is all on company property. [I: Uh huh] In the break area that's all. [I: Right, right, uh huh] Just sit down and we hand out a ballot and make (--)

I: You had an election committee and everything. That was (--)

R: Well basically your chief, we have chief stewards that are actually divisional stewards and [unclear]. We have like five chief stewards. Most places have one chief steward, then divisional stewards were over several stewards and then your departmental stewards. We have departmental stewards and what we call chief stewards. I don't know why they are called that. So your chief steward and another steward might run the election from another department.

I: Yes, you would have to have an election committee, because technically you are not an

officer, right?

R: That's right.

I: Yeah. I know the IUE constitution requires there be an election committee oversee the election.

R: I didn't know that, but we have one anyways. [Comment unclear]
Yeah, oh yeah.

I: Yeah, that is part of the international constitution.

R: All right, cause that is the only way to run it anyways.

I: Um, but there is that distinction between the stewards are not technically officers. [R: Right]
Um, so then you became a, you didn't like what, that you can't remember the incident, but you didn't like what your steward was doing. You ran against him and you defeated him. [R: Her]
Yeah her, and defeated her. Your father had been uh, in the IAM or IUE?

R: Yup, he was IAM. [Unclear] 1794. It is still around.

I: Right. Uh huh, yeah. Uh, so I can't imagine how big they are, because what's his name, uh, Jack Bolger told me he only had fifty-five members.

R: I think, well machinist and (--) When my father was president about eighty members.

I: They must have two members.

R: I'm guessing eight or nine.

I: Yeah, yeah. Uh, so in any event then you ran for office, you ran to be shop steward, you won, then what happened? You presumably then did you start to go to union meetings?

R: Oh yeah, you had to. [I: Uh huh] My predecessor Walter, my first predecessor I should say, Walter Wood was a stickler for that. You showed up or you were gone. I'm not so tough on that, but he was tough on that. So I went. I enjoyed it!

I: What would he do? I mean could he force a new election or something?

R: Oh yeah. If you missed two meetings in a row without a reasonable excuse you were, you were removed. Uh, I don't know if it is automatically that you cannot run again. [I: uh huh]
That is the way I probably, if I ever do that that is the way I am going to operate it. Cause there is an assumption behind there, that if you are removed you shouldn't at least for that election be able to run again. But that was the process and people showed up, believe me. I'm not so hard on that, but we get our qualms and you know, [I: uh huh, uh huh] be a little more reasonable.

I: So you started then going regularly to union meetings?

R: Oh yes.

I: Um, it's um, it's true that, I mean I think that what you are saying is true. That for the most part, I mean whether you, who goes to union meetings, uh, to local union meetings, very small percentage of the membership do. Although I find it interesting to ask you know, who those people are? I mean, who were the folks that (--) I mean once you got elected you had to go. [R: Yeah] How about those handful of folks who didn't go? What is, what is in the character of someone like that? What makes someone do that?

R: Well some of them were old hands from the strike. [I: Uh huh] They were friends of the officers.

I: From the forties?

R: No, of the seventy strike.

I: Oh right, 1970 strike. Former officers, right.

R: Yeah, or just people that enjoy (--) I mean the union (--) [I: social] If it is just a (--) Yeah, if you go to a union meeting and it is run right and people just don't sit there and say okay, I approve, it is a very interesting thing. Because the guy is sitting there telling you, well we are going to change this rule here, or this is our interpretation, or we want to go to this meeting, or here is the negotiations, or you know, whatever, and it is interesting. [I: Umhm] And I enjoyed them if it gets that way. Of course I also enjoy them if everybody listens to me and nobody complains, because I'm doing great. [I: laughs] But they can be very, very interesting, [fumbles on word] interesting, uh, interesting meetings. And some people go for that reason. I've got retirees come now. [I: Yeah] Not because I'm so interesting, but they like uh, I presume not because I'm not interesting.

I: You let retirees come?

R: Oh yeah. They can't vote, but they can come and they can speak too.

I: So then you started coming to union meetings and did you then decide immediately to run against Walter Wood, or (--)

R: Nope. I had no intention of running against Walter Wood and there are people who will never believe that. There was over the past several years, every Christmas time the union would give people ten dollars a week. It was called a (--) I forget what. A turkey. Turkey money they called it for some reason. That can add (--)

I: Who would the union give ten dollars to?

R: Every member.

I: Every member?

R: That's right. That's eight (--)

I: Where did this ten dollars come from?

R: From the treasury. Ten thousand bucks a whack. They gave out seventy thousand dollars over a period of years. Initially there was a very good reason. They had unexpectedly shut down the plant. The union grieved it, one half of it, but the arbitrator did allow them to, the company shut down one week you know, okay? So they (--) No, this was after the shutdown that they grieved it. All right. But they gave everybody eight dollars out of the treasury, everybody, all the members and there were two thousand members, right, to tie them over. It was, it wasn't much, but it was enough. And you figure 1969 or whenever it was, whenever the heck it was, you could buy quite a bit then you know. At least survival money. And the funny thing is though, they kept it up. It went from eight to ten the following year and stayed that way. Well finally they tried to get rid of it and they made a motion um, I made the motion to get rid of it. And they got rid of it. Then there was a big to do and all this stuff. And I had been making postings you know, my own postings. [Few words unclear] I'm putting on the collar and everything and I said, come to the union meeting, or you, you might lose your turkey money. They get there and they listened to the arguments and they agreed that we couldn't afford to hand out this money anymore. Well they didn't listen to any arguments. I still think that I was right. It may sound a bit naive, but in any case Walter Wood made the decision for whatever reason not to run the next time. And that was always a vote of contention between us two, but uh, he felt that I had done it on purpose, but it was only one department out of seven anyways. Uh, so we knew he wasn't running. There were several people that were going to run. I knew most of them and I didn't think they were anymore qualified than I was, despite the fact that I didn't have much seniority. It was like two and a half years. So I said, I'll run. And when I went to run everybody dropped out and I was elected unopposed.

You know the rumor is that I was suppose to quite after six months and I did. Then I ran again in uh, the following time and I ran against my predecessor and was elected again. Not so much I think because they liked the job I did, but that they felt that I deserved another chance, or at least one more shot. You know what I'm saying? I mean, the guy had one term and he hadn't done too bad so he deserves another, you know? And so I got elected. And after that (--) And I (--) That was the only unopposed election I ever had.

I: You uh, you were a shop steward at the time? [R: Yes] You were, were you, you were not on the executive board?

R: No, not at all.

I: No. Um, (--)

R: I wrote a criticism and I gave it to Walter, to Walter Wood prior to I believe, prior to all of this happening. And I was a terrible typist and everything used to drive me crazy, but uh, terrible typing.

I: Oh this?

R: Yeah. I (--) No, the way it was bent over. I outlined my criticisms about lack of communication with the stewards and how the executive board was not supporting the president. I you know, I [few words unclear]. And then I read it about four or five years after I had become president and realized that the, exactly the same criticisms that I had leveled at Wood and his executive board were applicable to myself and my executive board to a tee. So as far as my criticisms were concerned, except for in some minor areas, I hadn't improved at all over there.

I: [Chuckles] Did you, [R: unbelievable] did you ever see that Marlin Brando movie "Viva Separda"?

R: No, no.

I: You should check it out. [R: Really?] He plays this Mexican revolutionary which exactly the same thing happens. He makes all of these criticisms of the previous regime [R: yeah] and then he gets into power and it discovers that he has made, he is doing all of the same things that he was criticizing, you know. So [rest of comment unclear].

R: Well I even, I even said well at least I'm trying. Well then I looked back when he first started, he did the same thing. People don't react. They will sit there and work, but to teach them. I mean you are a fellow worker, who the hell are you to teach me anything, you know. Give me a break. So it's hard.

I: Um, when, there were about, your membership was what then, about four thousand?

R: When I became president? [I: Yeah] No, about seven hundred. [I: Uh huh] After the strike uh, well I had proof here somewhere, but it's there.

I: So they were no longer, Marshall Street was no longer functioning by this time?

R: Oh yeah, it's always functioned until recently, until eighty-six. [I: Uh huh] Um, it went from, lost a thousand jobs before the strike, [I: uh huh] so it went down to about three thousand total. [I: Uh huh] And when I say four thousand people, that is total employment. We never had more than twenty, twenty-two hundred members. There were other people. You know, they had a lot of management there. Of course there was company headquarters. You had a huge office, like three hundred and fifty office workers who walked out I guess, or six hundred. Six hundred, six hundred. And uh, a lot of management and machinists were roughly a hundred. Um, but when I became president, we lost a thousand from sixty-seven to seventy. [Unclear] within the strike and a lot of thing, worked moved out anyway. So it had steadied at around fifteen to seventeen hundred to eighteen hundred for a number of years [I: uh huh] when I became president. And when I was president it was anywhere from the seven, seventy it was I think when I started it went up to nine, almost a thousand members. And then when I left it was a little over six hundred. And now it is four hundred. It seems to be a pattern, or (--)

I: Did you, was uh, what percentage of your week, of your work week once you became a union president was devoted to union work?

R: Initially about half and then eventually all of it.

I: So you were (--) And how were you, were you paid? You took lost time and then were paid from a union treasury, or (--)

R: Uh, we were allowed a certain amount of time that the company pays without question. And then if it is company union meetings, company called meetings, grievance meetings, they pay. Anything other than that the company will bill us and we reimburse them. [I: Uh huh] So that is how it works. Very expensive the way I do business. Always has been.

I: Uh huh. So you've, so, so you almost immediately uh, you came into a job that you had no experience in uh, and you know, having basically run unopposed and uh, where was the union office? Was it here?

R: No it was at uh, oh God, 203 Main Street. [I: Uh huh] Had been for a number of years. [I: Uh huh] And it stayed there for some years until the landlord raised the rent on us after promising he wouldn't. So we said good-bye and we went to one other place and then we've been here for five or six years now I guess.

I: Um, what was that like to start on this (--) You won this job. You went you know, to start from not, with no experience. What did that feel like?

R: Uh, it was exciting. You know I was arrogant enough to think I could do the job. I knew it would be a lot of work, but as a matter of fact my, my, well it was at that time it was financial secretary, now it is called secretary/treasurer and the vice president, we were all new. And we worked together well. And I would spend, especially myself and the secret, the financial secretary, literally forty hours a week out of the office after work. So it was, sometimes it was seventy to eighty, even more hours a week on union business for the first three to four months. And then it gradually tapered down. But for the first years or two I was out of the office a lot flaring you know? I think we went through every single grievance we ever filed?

I: So you've had nothing like what they would call in some like auto or steel, or even some electrical, like a chief steward or a shop chairman, or anything like that? Did you have a position like that?

R: No. Did I ever hold one?

I: Did the local have a position like that?

R: Well we had an executive board that is composed of the chief stewards, the vice president, there is the financial secretary, the treasurer and those two officers have been combined. [I: Uh huh] Uh, the trustees and the um, oh what do you call, sergeant at arms. [I: Uh huh] But, and that is basically it. Almost everybody was new on the board. Not everybody, but almost

everybody.

I: Uh huh. So that you were at one level at least, you had nobody sort of being, who would be more experienced than you who was in a position to be a critic or anything like that.

R: That's right, exactly.

I: Um, did you uh, did you continue to feel so confident about your uh, about your role?

R: Uh, I'm an arrogant person anyways, so some of that confidence never left me. But you know, I mean you quickly learn that you don't know everything and that once you make a couple of mistakes you back off them and say well you know, go a little slower. But I think (--) I don't want to leave the impression that I just decided that I was president of the union and I was going to tell the company what to do. I mean I may have been somewhat naive, but I wasn't a, I do have something between the ears and I tried to handle it carefully. The only thing, I would, if I wasn't sure of something I would just simply tell the company no, automatically and then if I had to change my mind I could. If I, if I said yes, immediately then there was no way to change it back, you know what I'm saying? [I: Umhm] If you say no, you can't do that, they come up and ask me. And then I realize later, hopefully relatively quickly, that what they are asking is reasonable then you can always do it. But if you make a mistake and you'd say yes, and then it's, you can't undo what is done. So that is basically how we operated. I think we did fairly well. What else?

I: What was your relationship with the International? And what was your first encounter and contact with the International?

R: The first encounter with the International was with Al Cummings who was an International representative. He came up and sat down with us, told us how to write a grievance. We didn't even know how to do that. We did know that the way they had done it before we didn't think, they were kind of windy. You know, the basic practice was to let the chief stewards write their own grievances. And so they just basically told the story in them rather than just (--) And he gave us a basic form that could be used for every grievance virtually.

I: Are you suppose to focus on the contract?

R: Yeah, absolutely.

I: Yeah.

R: And you just fill in the appropriate article, name the specific employee if you knew the specific employee and gave you the [unclear]. And it's changed somewhat. We've added one sentence and since 1977, but not a great deal. And he gave that to us. And our first contact with the International was good. [I: Uh huh, uh huh] Very good.

I: Uh, have you ever participated in any of the uh, the affairs of the International?

R: I've gone to International Conventions [I: uh huh] of course. Haven't gone in a long time, but I use to go. I was a member of the District Executive Board for four years I think. [I: Uh huh] That was interesting. [I: Yeah] But uh, I prefer local business. I don't enter to (--) It just, it doesn't do much good anyways. [I: Uh huh] You know?

I: Um, what do you think about uh, this was quite an issue certainly with Wood, um that he brought in the IUE after all? [R: Yup] And his argument about bringing in the IUE was basically very similar to the one you just gave of the need for professionalism. Of having people to have skills and techniques and things like that and can give you that kind of service. Um, what do you think (--) Do you think that that is, ought to be the primary or exclusive function of the International? What do you think of other activities that the International gets involved in?

R: Well let me answer it this way. There are some locals and some International unions that walk in and virtually take over the local during negotiations for example. I don't like that [I: Umhm] and if I could stop it and I'm fairly certain I can, I won't allow that. They can help all they want. So I don't think that's their function. The IUE has never tried to do that at least when I was president and I know they didn't do it to Walter Wood either. They are, they should be there to help you, to give you the expertise he talks about is right. But there are times that uh, the problem is relatively easily amendable, I'm sorry, [unclear], is that the word I want? [I: yeah] Thank you. Uh, if you knew that you had a problem. You might, sometimes you don't know you are getting screwed. I mean you know, you don't know that the dust you are breathing in might be dangerous, or you don't know that you have got a right to this worker's comp thing. And just because they turn you down doesn't mean that you have, that's it. I mean you can go further. Uh, we need that expertise. We get free legal advice from them. Even from uh, they have, the district has a law firm that we can seek free legal advice [I: yeah] up to a point and that's good. A major thing that helps is that like in anyplace, you sit there and you work with a Human Resources Manager or you work, you know the owner knows you and you're an employee of his and you can sit down there and you can be the most reasonable person in the world or your argument in negotiations can make a great deal of sense, can totally destroy his and he is still not going to look at you as anything but an employee, or a pain in the ass, whoever he is. But the International Union is sitting back there at the table. Even if they don't say a word it's important. [I: Umhm] Because if they don't play fair with you, you've got someplace else to go and that means something to them.

Now Sprague was afraid of the International Union. That's why I think they moved some of the jobs out incorrectly, but they were afraid of it. They didn't know how to deal with it. So you know, it didn't make a difference. They didn't listen to any [voracity?] they might be prone to accept.

I: What do you think of International Union taking political positions?

R: Necessary, absolutely necessary. I mean, they you know, they receive reports of what is happening all the time and they know what is happening to the worker. I might not know what is happening in Ohio, or what is happening through General Motors Plant in Michigan. I don't know what the hell is going on except generally. I don't see anything wrong with it. I mean the people contribute money and it goes to [Coke?] funds. It's not something that uh, they don't know where it is going. It is not out of the treasury. I don't see anything wrong with it

whatsoever. I mean businesses do it.

I: It is not inappropriate for Bill Bywater to say, oppose American Intervention in Central America even though maybe some of his members may take exception to this.

R: Uh, I have (--) I don't know if he did or not. [Sentence unclear]

I: He did. As a matter of fact he is on the Trade Union Committee against American Intervention in Central America.

R: Okay. I, I can understand why he wants to, to do that. And I have some hesitancy about that, that aspect. Well I, when you say political issues I was thinking you know, trade issues, (--)

I: Well they will support candidates too.

R: [Unclear] Kennedy. Well that is fine, because you know they are going to be voting on issues important to a working person. If (--) Any american has a right to speak out. [I: Uh huh] And if an american happens to have a position of importance then he is going to carry more weight than I am. I can't, you can't change that. I think you should be careful, you know. I don't, frankly looking back on it now the protest to the Vietnam War, I don't think I would have objected if Bywater protested that. [I: He did that too. (laughs)] Okay. Because [few words unclear]. I mean that is important. But I don't know whether, for example let's go to Jim Wright and maybe that will give you a key as to how I feel. When he sat there and put forth his own peace plan, if I (Side I of tape fades out)

SG-NA-T001
SIDE II

Tape begins with Raymond (informant) speaking in mid-sentence:

R: There are certain lines beyond which you shouldn't go. And he can make whatever comments he wants, but to actually you know, to deal with another country. He is only Speaker of the House. And that may be, that is a big deal in Washington, but he is not president of the United States. You have to be careful. Somewhere along the line the interest of your members have to be involved.

I: Um, so you were defeated. What year were you defeated for president?

R: 1985.

I: 1985. Um, what were the circumstances of your defeat?

R: I can't tell you. I haven't objectively looked them over yet. I have heard reports that people objected to the way I did things. I do have a temper. I do like things my way. The longer I was president the more I became convinced, now that I look back on it, that I was right and the less I wanted people to argue with my positions. Um, it was coming a time when Sprague was talking about decentralization. I was dead set against a lot of what they wanted to do and indeed had gone, threatened to go to arbitration on one issue. I remember we had. We were in the process. I think they were determined that they had to do that. And I've heard reports. I never investigated them, not even during the election that Sprague was involved in it too, but I think I lost because it was time for me to lose. I think I was a bit too arrogant and I pushed people too hard.

During the 84 preparation for the 85 negotiations I had a decision to make. I knew that I was losing, I wasn't communicating with the executive board very well. And I had to make a choice as to whether I sit down and try to patch things up and discuss things with them, or simply bullet my way through and try to get it done that way. And that is the way I chose. And it got done basically what I wanted done, but it cost me. I was laid off for ten months. [I: Uh huh] So it cost. And I don't know if I would do the same thing over again, cause I haven't changed as a person.

I: But then what? You ran against the person who defeated you [R: yes] and defeated them.

R: Yes, at roughly the same ratio that he defeated me. Three to one. [Laughs]

I: Not quite.

R: Not quite.

I: I think that a lot of times union elections tend to be lopsided like that.

R: That much?

I: More lopsided than elections in the general public.

R: Although I won a vote, one of them by something like twenty votes.

I: Uh huh. Uh huh. And when was the, when again was the first year you won? 19?

R: 77.

I: That's what I thought, yeah.

R: June.

I: Uh, I don't know if you're (--) It's interesting that most of the people that I have interviewed, including, I interviewed a guy yesterday who worked at Marshall Street when it was on a Arnold Print Works. Fascinating. He was an engraver. Uh, but are you aware of the fact that your, that

your attitudes about work are different from a lot of people's? Especially older people's?

R: How? I haven't given you my attitude about work work. I gave you my attitude about work when I was a college student, but that's all right.

I: Okay, then good. Then has it changed? [R: Laughs] Yes you did give me your attitude about working.

R: Yeah, that was when I was a college student.

I: Okay.

R: I enjoy working. I enjoy doing a good job. [I: Uh huh] But it is not to be all and end all. [I: Uh huh] Once I get uh, if I make enough money and I get to know, then the job, as long as I'm doing a decent job then I proceed in my own agenda. So I suppose in essence maybe I have given you the attitude.

I: I think um, most people (--)

R: But I do, when I do work I do do a good job and nobody can deny that.

I: Most people of our parent's (--) I'm about your age. I'm only a couple of years older than you. Most people of our parent's generation, certainly virtually everyone that has been interviewed for this project so far, talk to them about work, what they will talk about is pride at workmanship. And you know, and they will say that um, that there is a sort of change of attitude, that younger people have a different attitude. And I think it is true! I think it is true in terms of my own psychology and I hear it in you also. This sort of like, even what you just said. Okay, you know, when you are on the job you want to do a good job and that sort of thing, but it is not, it is not the be all and end all of your life. [R: Correct. Can't be] Um, and uh, are you aware of any distinction between say your own attitudes about work and say people a generation older than you?

R: No.

I: No, you don't think so?

R: You don't forget. [Sighs] How do I say this. Well maybe I can insult people in absentee.

I: Right. You have to name names.

R: Number one (--) Okay, yeah. I'm not going to. Number one uh, it is understood you know, when I say that the job that I do has to be good. If I don't do the job then I don't keep the job. And the work is uniformly good I think at least for (--) You can check it out, but I don't get many, I never have, but I am not going to sit there and concentrate solely on the job. I mean that is absurd. I do the job, I do it well and then there are other things that I have to do. Secondly I represented many of the very people you are talking about, or I saw them in the sixties when I

was working there and they did a very good job. And they worked hard, but they didn't work any harder than anybody else who is in their age now. I mean the people, they're saying there is an attitude change. Uh, they were sixty then. Now there are sixty year olds, they were forty then. Now the forty year olds who were twenty I think you generally can find an attitude difference from say, once they reach twenty-seven, twenty-eight and that is just a guess. I mean it could be earlier, because they're settled. Then they started to take work more seriously, but to sit there and say it's the older people paid more attention to their work, no. I mean there is just no proof. [I: Could it be uh (--)] I think you can show that it was more important to them in that it was the center of their life. Everything revolved around Sprague's. Nowadays Sprague employees do not as a general rule they don't socialize. [I: Right] Maybe they never did. But to sit there and for them to (--) Hey, I feel the same way. I mean I see a kid twenty-five years old and he is not working um, the way I, I think that I would, but then I am not twenty-five, I'm forty-two.

I: Could that, could it be a matter of perception rather than reality. You know, the attitude you know, I feel as though it is more important to me, rather than it really being [unclear]?

R: No, I think, I think it was more important. I mean there whole life did revolve, they had nothing else. Don't forget these are people that went through the depression. They either couldn't get an education or there wasn't any socialization to show that an education was necessary. Their opportunities were severely limited. And there were also people, most of them, who could have easily have gone on to college. Highly intelligent people. So I don't think, I just think that that is what they had and that is the way they reacted, but I don't think that you can show that their work was any better than the work today, the quality. I think maybe you can, but I don't think so. Don't forget in 1970 there was a strike over a work factor. In part because they needed more work put out by people, but in part because they needed better work too. [I: Umhm] And that's the [unclear].

I: Do you think that union activity has anything to do with a person's feelings or attitudes about work?

R: How so?

I: Uh, well would it be, would uh (--) One of the ways I ask this question was, is, does one generation feel differently about work than the other generation? What I am saying is do you think a union activist feels different, might feel differently about work because he is a union activist, or is he a union activist because he feels differently about work, than someone who is not?

R: It (--) There are two types of, well there are many types of [unclear], but a union activist and then a non-activist but is still a union member, doesn't mean that either one of them are not pro-union, but one is more active than another. One that is more active than another is liable to distrust the company more, all right? [I: Umhm] I mean I think that is self evident. The other type of person might (--)

I: Let me, I want to dig into that a little more, okay?

R: All right.

I: Uh, does he become more active because he distrusts the company, or does he distrust the company because he has become more active? Which come, which comes first the distrust or the union activity?

R: I don't, I can't answer that. How, you know, the chicken or the egg, I mean. [I: Uh huh. Yeah. Uh huh] Um, you become a union, some people become union people because they want protection, uh, super seniority and then they realize, hey, there is a reason for a union there. [I: Uh huh] Some people become a union because they're belligerent and pains in the asses anyways.

And then they even learn to quiet down, or they'll vote it out, because those type of people don't last very long unless there is a reason, you know. [Comment unclear]

I: [Comment unclear-both are speaking at same time]

R: Well the strike didn't, we didn't create the strike. That was done by another union. They just followed along. But there were legitimate reasons for that strike on both uh, on part of the union anyways, both major unions. There is no way of determining. You know, some people have an attitude, some don't. Um, some people don't like authority, some don't care, or some of them enjoy it. They're all union members.

I: How do you feel about authority?

R: How the hell am I suppose to answer that. [I: Laughs] Jesus.

I: No, I think that's an interesting question for somebody in your position, because at one level you are in a position of authority, but then you also (--) What's the role of a union? Is the role, you know, is (--) You answer that for me.

R: Role of a union!

I: Yeah, what's the function of a union?

R: The basic function of a union, well there are two, two basic ones. It doesn't mean what they only do and you can add to them and so you could even hide the basic functions. Can negotiate a contract to improve your wages and your working conditions. And then you monitor the contract to make sure that the contract is basically followed and that people don't get screwed over, because you have to remember that a contract is not a constitution. It is the exact opposite. The const (--) At least our constitution says, here are the rights of the government and that is all they can do [I: umhm] and everything else is reserved for the people. The contract is the exact opposite. [I: Cannot transcribe comment, speaks too softly] Here are the rights of the people and everything else the company can do, literally. [I: Uh huh] So whatever rights you have they have to regard it very carefully. And that generally falls in the, in the, confronts the company, because they, they negotiate this document yet they don't want to follow it. [I: Yeah,

yeah] They want to avoid it. And they negotiate it not so much from what their need is, but to avoid it, kind of, sort of sitting down saying this is what we need. Let's sit down and talk. They're always, they just, sometimes they don't think of what they're doing.

I: Is that never the position of the union?

R: What's that?

I: To negotiate a contract and not want to follow it?

R: No, never. We do that if (--)

I: How about if it's a bad contract?

R: I got one now! [I: Laughs] I've got one at Brown Street. It's ridiculous! You're stuck with it!

I: Uh huh.

R: Because if we sit there and say we're not going to follow that contract, I've got nothing. I haven't got the law, because it takes too long. Look at OSHA. [I: Uh huh] The government is ridiculous. On day to day it doesn't help at all. Neither does the international day to day. They're a sort of this specter that the company doesn't like. You've got to have a contract that can function. And if I ignore one part then I'm dead, because they're going to say, if you're not going to follow this, we're not going to follow that. You've got to have some guideline, because in the long run GE can break the IUE anytime it wants to. GM can break the auto workers anytime it wants to, if it wants to spend a billion dollars. Because the UAW does not have a billion dollars to spend, [I: Right, right] but it is whether or not they want to do it. And Sprague could [break their shoe in?] if they wanted to spend the money. So you've got to have (--). Not only do you have to have some sort of rules to follow, you have to have, what's the word I'm looking for? You have to be thought of as having some sort of integrity.

I: Yes you do.

R: Yeah. [I: Uh huh. Um, you] So no, I've never attempted to avoid the contract.

I: You mentioned um, social life in the past. How about um, what do you like to do off the job? Or what did you like to do when you were younger as a change?

R: You mean once I became president?

I: No, you know, before you became president. What did you like to do off the job?

R: Well I did a lot of reading, [I: uh huh] history, religion, not that I'm terribly religious, but it was part of the history. Uh, that is basically it. And this is just before I became, and after I became president I did nothing but union for eight years. [I: Um] That's not the case anymore,

but it was the case for eight years.

I: The company had a very rich kind of social life for its employees in the forties and fifties. I mean they did, it is really clear that they did have at least twenty-five plus clubs and they had a civil air patrol club and baseball teams and all sorts of things like this. Uh, since, when you started working with Sprague have they had that, anything like that kind of social life?

R: Well there is a golf league. [I: Uh huh] That still exists. There were, I guess there was a softball league. There was a bowling league. It all, some of it sort of drifted away. The old-time parties and stuff drifted away. You know when you've got a union facing you and they had that since 1937, that will confront you up to the point where you raise your voice, then it is easy to get along with them. But when you have a genuine union sitting there and after you get up there and scream and say you're not being very nice and the guy stopped and there's Walter Wood, the first president is over there sitting there saying, that's fine, but here's what we want. Then it stops. Then you either got the treat these people as someone to be treated, or ignore them. And they try to do, well they try to do both actually. And all of this friendliness was a ploy in many ways. And it was a way to control. You know, give them a, give them a turkey dinner once in awhile, or take them out and have a Christmas party. And they worked for a dollar forty-seven an hour, top pay or middle pay I'd say in the late, late sixties. Average being less than that. Um, I mean Jesus you got people living, virtually living on fifty bucks a week.

I: Has the union uh, or had the union in the past absorbed any of those sort of social function?

R: Yeah. Well they used to have their own functions, sure.

I: Uh huh.

R: Every, the ICW every union meeting was a social function. They had food and booze at those meetings, free! [I: Uh huh] That's how they got people at their meetings. The IUE, IUE doesn't do that. [I: Uh huh] Although they do have their meetings at places where they are available. I mean you know you have got to be somewhat realistic, you know, that's where you have your meetings, but not, not during the meetings. [I: Uh huh, uh huh] So I guess the ICW meetings were well attended regularly. Fifteen thousand members, two thousand members and a hundred to a hundred and fifty would go every meeting. So they were all, I guess they virtually got a party every fourth Tuesday, or whatever the hell it was in those days. I don't know. I've lost track of the question.

I: It was in terms of social life. Did the union [few words unclear]?

R: Yeah. Oh yeah, they had a, the IUE always had a June social. And then they had a Christmas party. Now we just have a Christmas party. [I: Uh huh] A matter of expense. [I: Sure] Gets too expensive.

I: Sure, sure. What do you make of the fact of uh, of former union presidents becoming a personnel (--)

R: Always happens. Always happens.

I: Not just in Sprague's right?

R: Yeah I think so. Yeah. [I: Unclear] Um, it tends to show people who are capable of running things, or (--)

I: It's like the bad kid in town becoming a cop.

R: That's right. Yeah, yeah. But you know, some of these people uh, it turned out pretty good, others not. Sometimes they get rid of people who are a pain in the butt and they put them in a position and leave them there. I've seen that happen. I've never been offered a position though. [I: Laughs] So I must be, I must be hopeless, absolutely hopeless. Only kidding and it was a joke.

I: Um, so as I understand it you, did you say that you think that your own feelings about work changed as you, as you grew older?

R: Oh sure. When I was a kid I didn't care. You know, I was going to change the world, or I was going to be uh, I didn't know what the hell I thought I was going to be, but I was going to have fun. And then I realized, you see you don't work for a living until you realize it. I don't care what you are getting paid and I don't care how long you worked, you're working, you don't work for a living until you turn around and realize this is what I'm going to do, or very similar to what I'm going to do for the rest of my life. [I: Uh huh] And I don't care what you are until you realize that. You could be a lawyer, or a coil winder, whatever until you realize that this is it. You weren't working for a living, you were just playing the game. [I: Uh huh] And so up till I guess in the mid-seventies I was playing a game. Then I realized, hey, college degree or not, I mean you are not going to be a Senator for Massachusetts, you are not going to be president. You may do a lot of things, but basically you are going to work, whether it's in Sprague's or out of Sprague's. So you better wise up. And when I got [unclear] to Sprague's that's when I started taking it seriously. And I do do good work. I may not do it very often [I: laughs], but I do. And I can even get managers to testify to that. And I don't think I'm different. [I: Uh huh] You know. Sprague's is not the center of my life and Commonwealth Sprague is not the center of my life, but uh (--) And I don't think the difference is that great by the way, because I know a lot of these people and it wasn't the center of their lives either. Perhaps it was more important. Of course we have more distractions now, but it may have been more important to them. And I don't mean to indicate this big gulp, because there isn't, but there is a difference. But as far as work I find the younger kids don't work I don't think is, what's the word I'm looking for um? [I: Conscientious?] Thank you. Conscientiously as I do, but hell I didn't when I was twenty-five.

I: Yeah, uh huh. So you're not, you're not judgemental of that.

R: Everybody is. And I'm terribly judgemental. [I: Laughs] When you think (--) You know, when you sit back and try to be real you know, objective or balanced, because you can't be objective you know, if you try to take a balanced view point then I don't think there is a great

difference between uh, [I: umhm] then and now. Not when you compare age groups.

I: Uh, I want to show you my card for a minute. Um, talk about it. Um, the subtitle of our project is called "Shifting Gears, the Changing Meaning of Work in Massachusetts". And I am one of six scholars in residence all over the state of Massachusetts. There is one in Holyoke and one in Fall River. One in Lawrence, one in Gardner and one in the Black Stone Valley and here.

R: Where is the Black Stone Valley?

I: Black Stone Valley is coming up from Fall River, up near um, oh near Worcester. [R: Oh] A lot of the textile mills and stuff there. [R: All right] Um, and uh, so uh, so in any event we get together, the six of us scholars get together about once a month and we talk about uh, our various projects and that sort of thing. And we're doing oral history all over in all of these places. And um, one of the things that we debate is, and discuss is what the project is all about. The Changing Meaning of Work. Uh, and we talk about you know, what is work? What is it's meaning? Does it have any meaning? Has that meaning changed? Etc. You know, it's uh (--) What does it mean to have meaning? Uh, and uh, I through out the fact, I said look, why are we talking about this? I said, we (--)

R: You're going to ask me an unanswerable question is what you are going to do.

I: Yeah, okay, fine. Then you just say I can't answer that.

R: What is work [unclear].

I: No, uh, [pause] the question that we try to ask and we've, and they pose it all different kinds of ways is basically how has the meaning of work cha (--) How has the meaning of work changed from 1920 to 1980 in North Adams? How has the meaning of work changed? Uh, and one of my fellow scholars said to me, he said you can't answer that question. They won't know how to answer it. And I thought that was an incredibly arrogant uh, you know, point of view. [R: Chuckles]. I said, well you know, the very least you can do is ask them and let them decide whether they can answer it or not. [Laughs]

R: You realize of course that now I can't say that I, that I can't answer that question. You've [unclear].

I: [Laughing] I've put it away.

R: Yeah, that's right. You've limited my response to, to an answer. You (--)

I: Well, but it's like, it sort of like, I don't know if you watch public television. Joseph, you know (--)

R: I am a member! [I: Yeah] I joined last, last [unclear].

I: Have you watched Bill Moyer's interviews of Joseph Campbell? You should.

R: I taped the first one.

I: Oh Jesus!

R: But uh (--)

I: Wonderful. But that's I mean, the sort of thing. You know, he just sort of throws out these things and Campbell always has something witty to say.

R: Who the hell is Joseph Campbell?

I: He was this, he was this brilliant, talk about in residence. [R: Yeah] He was the mythologist in residence at Sarah Lawrence College for years. And he would never let them sign up for a course. He had this office that was set up like a circle, like a seminar. And he would sit there and pontificate and people would just come in. People stayed at Sarah Lawrence for eight years just to listen to him talk.

R: You know I taped the first one and then I lost track of it, but uh, it was interesting.

I: Yeah, he is a fantastic guy. So in any event what does, speaking of the (--) Does this notion of the Changing Meaning of Work in Massachusetts, or North Adams, 1920 to 1980, does that notion have any meaning for you? And if so, what?

R: Oh yes! Let's go back to the history of North Adams. In roughly 1905 and I remember that, it's 1904, but close enough to my father's birthday in 1905, we had 25,000 people in North Adams. [I: right] And that was more than Pittsfield. Now we have fifteen or so. So in seventy-five years we've gone down, we're lost half our population roughly. We've gone from, I don't know what they were in 1920, but I think they were textile mills. [I: Yeah, all over] Quite a bit. Um, and then we went to um, to textile state.

I: Arnold was really the big place though.

R: Yeah. Oh there was a lot though. There was a whole lot.

I: Yeah there were a lot of other ones, but that was the major.

R: Yeah. And then we went to, Sprague's basically took over. There is a difference of the type of work. Had something (--) I guess the textile mill is basically more heavy, heavier type of work than Sprague's, but it's not like steel mill verses a, verses a sewing mill. And I don't think that, maybe I'm wrong, but I don't think Arnold Print Works is a sewing thing. They make the cloth, right?

I: Right. No, they don't make the cloth, they print it.

R: Print it, okay, yeah, but (--)

I: It's already made. It comes in (--)

R: Yeah. So it's an industrial type thing. [I: yeah it is, quite heavy work. It's not uh, right. Um, so that's got to be important to North Adams, to the people you know? What their attitude is. There is something about work that is satisfying. Um, you work for a living? Right? You're satisfied with what you do. There are some things satisfying with physical work as well. You go in, you get it done, you do it satisfactorily, you come out and you feel good. I don't know. Who the hell knows whether you can explain that or not? Maybe you need a biologist to explain that, but that is true. And I don't very much that that has changed over the years. I think there was in most instances, maybe I'm wrong because I don't know the print work business very well, but there seems to me that there was a lot of skilled work in that type of thing. Just besides the collared guy, you know? There is a lot of stuff. So maybe there was somewhat more satisfaction in that, or a different type than there is now. Again, I've only, I've only got Sprague's. But I don't know if the work itself, if satisfaction people get from the work has changed a great deal. Maybe in the 20's you have to remember, we talked about it before, horse and buggy was still around. I mean the cars were still there, but there were horses and horse and buggy era. [I: Yeah, yeah] The most important difference I think between now and sixty years ago is that I can get, I've got gas money, I can get in my car and go anywhere in the country. And my grandfather couldn't even if he wanted to. [I: Right] I mean it would take him, you figure twenty miles a day with a horse and buggy, right? I mean you could walk twenty miles a day. The Roman army did, but they were, they were hauling it, all right. But I mean you (--) What did I read? In the ancient world you walked, a heavy laden caravan for example would be six to eight miles a day. [I: Right] Now I don't know (--)

I: Maybe moving. Drag themselves from one end of town to the other.

R: Yeah! Yeah, that's right. So you might get to Cheshire after a day. [I: Right] So you didn't have that, those options. You were stuck where you were. So everything maybe was more important, took on more meaning for you. So I don't know, maybe we have more distractions, but that's a big difference. I think we're freer now. Just because of that we're physically freer, but I think there's a tendency to look up on this area as a dead area that uh, is going to go down anyways. And I think that's, that's infected everybody here. I think uh, this, this mass [mocha?], which is an absurdity is looked upon as a savior and people are finally you know, even before I met you that people are going to finally realize that they are only going to hire maybe fifty, sixty people and they are going to pay them four bucks an hour and it isn't going to do a damn bit of good. It is going to be too late. I think people have given up and that may be the difference. Don't forget, in 1920 we had a future. We were North Adams. We were bustling. We had the [unclear] Tunnel wasn't just something that you put plaques up upon, it was a living two trains a day. I mean trains would go by side, you know, sideways, simultaneous. It was a vastly different, different type of place.

I: Well if [mass mocha?] is not the answer do you have a kind of alternative vision?

R: Same as it's always done for Christ sake. Go out and get work. I mean how the (--)

I: By bringing a corporation in, major corporation, manufacturing company?

R: Sure, I mean unless you are making jet engines, what the hell difference does, you know, that are huge, what difference does it make that it takes you an hour more to go from, from the turnpike to North Adams then it would if you had a bypass. What difference does it make? Sprague Electric Company used that argument. It is ridiculous. Their products aren't going to spoil. Doesn't make a damn (--) So they get to their customer at eleven o'clock instead of nine o'clock, big deal. [I: Yeah] It's absurd. That was, that was one argument, we're isolated, but we have a work force that is willing to work. I used to be upset with our people, because they work overtime incessantly. And I wanted to, that's a job there, let me post it and get somebody else hired. Bullshit! I want my overtime!

I: They were willing to work.

R: Yeah, that's right! And without even, nobody forced you had to work. They had rules to force people to work overtime and occasionally they would have to do that, but most often they didn't. People worked forever. It's a good work force, but people have given up and I think that may be the difference. There was a (--) Don't forget, who the hell wrote [Babbett?] and the rest of those?

I: Sinclair Lewis.

R: I mean this is, this is what he is writing about. [Globbersville?], New York for Christ sake was a living, breathing place. I mean all, you know, I guess they called it the [Globbersville] right, because they made (--) There was a (--) My mother used to go there when she was a kid. She was born in 1917. And she used to visit her uncle. I forget his name. They used to have a one arm bandit up there and everything. [I: Uh huh] There was a living, breathing place that was alive. Now it's, I've been by it, it's as quiet as can be I guess.

I: The place that's, I was told that the place that is a restaurant over here in the park was a gambling place.

R: Oh yeah, I didn't know that! [I: Yes] Wow! They've got them still here. You know, they're still around. I didn't know that.

I: [Laughs] Um, (--)

R: Sorry to ramble.

I: I know, I think that that's very, you know, that's very, very important stuff. What are the, what are the special satisfactions? You talked about, about work, physical work. What are the special satisfactions to you of work as a union official?

R: Uh, it's hard. Best con (--) I was part of the team that negotiated the best contract we ever got in 1982. In 1979 we got the most money we ever got. But as it was pointed out in my re-election campaign by my opponent, percentage wise it was not. And he quite correctly did so.

In 1982 we got the best. The best wages. Almost twenty-six percent over three years. I've heard that one local did better that year in the state, but I don't think so. We may have been the best in the state. We doubled the pension. And I was satisfied with that for about five days. [I: Chuckles] That's it. And then you go on, because it's like housework.

I: But that's, that gives you satisfaction to be able to negotiate a good contract.

R: Oh yeah, it's great. I mean doing it is fun too. As long as you know there is a possibility that you could you know (--) Even (--) There has got to be a reasonable possibility that you are going to come to an agreement. As long as both sides are dealing relatively fairly with one another then it's fine.

I: But are these typically three year agreements?

R: Yes. [Unclear]

I: Then what do you do for the other two and a half years?

R: You monitor the contract. You (--) Somebody gets discharged unfairly, you file a grievance. You make sure back pay is done. And you got to, you got to proof read the contract of course. You go to district meetings. You inform the people as to what's happening. Our newspaper comes out sporadically, but it does. [I: Umhm] You watch out for safety matters. There is always somebody is getting paid wrong. [I: Uh huh, yeah] The overtime is wrong, or (--)

I: Always somebody complaining about it.

R: Yeah, or somebody's foreman is jumping on somebody. And then you find out the foreman is not jumping on them. I, honest to God I stood right there and I just happened to see what this guy, the foreman watched him do something wrong and told him that he did something wrong. And I watched. And sure enough a half an hour later and it isn't common, because I check these things out carefully, but sure enough a half an hour later the guy come over and was talking and did not come over and say, hey, he's up to me, but he didn't. We started talking about it. And he did mention that the foreman had not quite treated him right. And what it was is he was embarrassed. And he sort of misinterpreted what the foreman did. Now that can happen too. Not often, but it does happen. And uh, that was a shock to me. You know, I thought everybody you know. As a union man our members are always right and that's the way I feel, [I: uh huh] unless they're proven wrong. If they're proven wrong then you tell them, you're wrong. In this case I just happened to be there. And please don't, don't take it that I feel that all the complaints are that way, cause very few are. Cause these are adult people and they, they know, they make adult comments, but uh, sometimes they're wrong. It's interesting. But never ending. It's like housework. [I: Uh huh] Christ, we've had some people fired three times and you get them back twice. [Chuckles] Third time they're gone. Sometimes the fourth time, it all depends. And it's, sometimes it's the same people, that's a favorite comment of the company. You're always fighting for the wrong goes. Sometimes it is the same people and it's usually only 10-15% ever have a problem, but it's usually different people. [I: Uh huh] So over a period of uh, ten, fifteen years virtually 60-70% of the workforce if going to be directly affected and directly need

assistance from the union, or demand assistance from the union because they you know, they run the union. They own the union. And the other people that aren't affected so they think, are in many ways are not affected because they become ineligible, they do try to put the screws to the unions there. It is a very negative way to look at things, but I've gone through these periods where, let's work together, and it just hasn't worked, not with Sprague's. And I, I, I heard it's happening, but I want to see it work over the long haul. I would prefer to see uh, how, what's the word I'm looking for again, I'm missing it. Um, the relationship. [I: Cooperation?] No, um, antagonistic is not the word. [I: Adversary?] That's it. They don't, company doesn't want adversary relationship. I would prefer that type of relationship with an understanding by both sides that they can move and be flexible. That is better. But to sit there and try to pretend that the union is your buddy, or the union to pretend that the company is your buddy is wrong. I mean, Reagan and whatever, a reasonable american politician that knows what he's doing and that's, and a Russian politician knows what he's doing can come very close, but they're never going to be buddies. And that is the way it should be here. And if you maintain your basic position as a union, the company maintains your basic position as a company, which is adversarial. Now I didn't say antagonistic, but it is adversarial and I think it's much better. That's the way I prefer.

I: Uh, did you ever make friends with people who you worked with? Were you friendly with people on the job, especially when you first became a shop steward?

R: Of course.

I: Would that (--) Did developing network in your immediately work area, did that help you to become a shop steward?

R: No. [I: No?] No, as I told you I'm not very sociable. I don't, even (--) That's small case friend. I don't make friends very easily. [I: Yeah, yeah] No, I'm just, I'm a bull in a lot of ways. Maybe that's why I get elected. I don't know. It's hard to determine.

I: Um, what do you think of the idea or the possibility of unions, especially in the, in this northern Berkshire area of being, of unions being able to work together for among other things? For example, for uh, to bring work in or something like that, or for whatever reason. Is there any purpose for a union, for different local unions to have contact with each other.

R: Yes. I'd like to see one union represent everybody here.

I: Uh huh. So you mean like the Wobblies or something? Like that idea behind that.

R: Oh I didn't know. I hadn't read about the Wobblies in years ago. I guess, what does that make me? A radical red? I'd like to see one union represent everybody in North Adams, [I: Uh huh] everybody in Massachusetts. What the hell. [I: Uh huh] So what if they, you go out and you need help, you've got 50,000 or a 100,000, or 200,000 thousand people to help. [I: Oh yeah] The more the merrier. It'd be hard, because you'd have to, there are differences in each unit. Sure there, but to answer your question, yes. Not only would I like to see them cooperate to get more work in, I'd like to see, I'd like to see one union, but it will never happen. Never. [I:

Uh huh] Anymore than Mexico would merge with Guatamalo. They each have their own uh, [I: uh huh] historical you know, red threads as Mr. Pierce at the State College used to say.

I: Yeah, well that's actually something even within Sprague I find that peculiar. I mean I read the story of the development of unions at Sprague. Ray Bliss, he wrote a very good story about that. But it's not at all clear to me why the office workers and the production workers should have two different bargaining. At least why they should have two different internationals. I mean especially, isn't there quite a bit of cooperation? What's the level of cooperation between your three unions at this point?

R: Very good. [I: Yeah] It wasn't always so good. With my predecessor Walter Wood it was excellent. I have not been able to communicate until recently as well. Recently it's been quite good.

I: Uh huh. Do you, do all the uh, do you bargain together, or?

R: Well the last negotiations the office president Jack Bolger was in our negotiation to make a point. We bargain separate. They have bargained together in the past. Where Walter Wood was basically the spokesman for all three unions when it came to benefits. He was very good at that. [I: Umhm, umhm] But uh, I have been unable to do that. [I: Uh huh] Although they came in on our negotiations last time. When you've got a six hundred man union despite whatever the size of the other union is, you have a great deal of uh, of influence [I: right] over everybody. That is the office union. Now it's somewhat smaller. You know, we listen to them because they've got a lot of experienced people anyways. [I: Right, right] But as far as size, they just don't have the influence they once had. [I: Umhm, umhm]

I: Um, I have a few things that I want to ask you off the tape, but before I shut it down I wanted to say, and I may end up remembering something else that could, something else coming up that I want to ask you. Uh, but before I shut it down is there anything um, oh I know what I wanted to ask that I left out here. Tell me the best experience you ever had at Sprague's as a worker? You can pass on it. You can say I can't think.

R: No. Put it on pause, let me think of it otherwise you are going to waste a lot of tape.

I: Just looking for a good anecdote I think I can say.

R: Oh an anecdote. Oh boy! [Both laugh] I use to enjoy coil winding before I you know, became deeply involved in the uh, in the company, in the company union business. [I: Uh huh] But I just enjoyed the comradery. You want an anecdote. That's kind of, kind of difficult.

I: No, that's all right. I think that's good. [R: I use to (--)] You mean working with on the job with?

R: Yeah. [I: Yeah] Yeah and conver (--). I use to go to retirement parties and in one sense they're enjoyable, in another sense they're not. But I think people are kind of close. [I: Umhm] [Few words unclear] than they should be. I enjoy them, not [unclear]. Any specific instance? I

remember Leo Mullin used to be our boss. You want an anecdote, I'll give you, I'll give you an anecdote. Uh, I was cutting the wire as we were um, and it is related to the union business somehow, I don't know why. But uh, I was cutting the wire and not putting it where I should be and it was all over the floor. And Leo was kind of hefty. Uh, again he was my direct boss. Walking out and starting slipping and sliding and he looked like he was doing a dance. I thought sure he was going right down on his fanny. I mean here's a guy in his sixties and I thought sure he was going to be down and break a leg and he never did. All he did was his leg went about four different ways and he finally stabilized. And all he did was give me a dirty stare and I just laughed. I thought it was funny. He was the last boss I ever really liked by the way. And uh, that was like 1976. And uh, shortly there after we were talking to him and he said, oh if you're so damn upset about the way things are going why the hell don't you run for steward. And then I did. [I: (Laughs) that's a good one] Yeah. So that was Leo Mullin. I sort of compare the two. He died over the weekend.

I: Oh, just recently? Just this weekend?

R: No, no. Back in 76 or 77. I must have been before the president. It just all of a sudden. I was just over the weekend. When we came back on a Monday he was gone. He was really missed. He was a good boss. I liked him. I liked working for him and not too many bosses I do, but I did, I did him.

I: What's the worst thing that ever happened to you?

R: The union business.

I: Just, just, [R: yeah, yeah] just union business. Losing the presidency?

R: Uh, that hurt but I knew it was a common, you know. And there's too much frustration in that. You know, it's um, I haven't looked at that objectively yet. You know, not yet. It's too close.

I: Do you uh, do you see yourself as different in any way from your co-workers, to people in the community, uh ?

R: Everybody sees themselves different. How do you mean that?

I: Well.

R: I'm not trying to avoid the question. Do you mean do I think I'm better?

I: No, no. I mean I was trying to draw something more out of you. I'll tell you, I mean I do right away just basically from people I've interviewed. Stuff like that. I mean, um, there are very few people I've interviewed who would have any idea who Joe Campbell was, or that [unclear]

R: I didn't either until I just happened to see it on Channel 2. [Unclear]

I: How many people you know, what's the, what's the viewership of Channel 2 in this community?

R: Oh, I don't know. It could be better, but [I: all right] yeah, all right, yeah.

I: I mean do you sit, do you sit and talk to people about this with anyone? Who's the last person you mentioned this to? [Laughs] Do you see what I'm saying?

R: Well yeah, but, yeah but see I tell them I watch Dr. Who and they just, they just walk away. This guy is crazy! Um, I still, I tape them and when I get my VCR going I'll tape them again. I just, I just love the show. I don't know. It's just, maybe it's because of my one so called academic background. [I: Uh huh] I mean I have it and they don't. That's all. But I (--)

I: Does that make you feel different, or ?

R: No. [I: No?] That makes me feel like a failure. Are you kidding me. When you have a college degree and I'm working for (--) When I'm on union business I basically work for \$6.88 an hour. [I: Uh huh] And that's ridiculous! That's less money than I would have been making as a bonus worker back in 1970, 1981! I mean not only have I not progressed, I've gone backwards. And that's one of the, hopefully one of the reasons why I won't be running again. I've got to start making some, some you know, money. I don't know if I'll be able to. Not that I wanted to cash in on it. I knew when I went to college that there would be no jobs in history and that isn't why I went. I went because I was basically told that that is what you are. You are going to go to college. And I just took it for granted.

I: What would you do as an alternative to this? Would you try to work your way up at Sprague, or uh?

R: No, are you kidding me! God no. I'd be the worst manager you ever saw in your life. I have no patience. That's my, that's one of the reasons, probably the major reason why I got beat before. I have no patience. Some (--) It's funny, because sometimes I have, I like detail. So much detail it's ridiculous. And other time I don't want to, I don't want to see it at all. I don't know if there is a pattern behind, you know, when I go for something or not. I have no idea. Sometimes, well all the times when we go to arbitration you know, I have, we have rings and rings of information most of which I know is totally useless. I mean our lawyers just looks at us and says [makes thump sound], and he tries to pretend that I'm helping him. The first [IRA treasure] case we ever had we'd sent them, it was over two hundred pages of different documents. You know, I mean one document might be ten pages long. [I: Right] And there were also things that repeated, but it was at least two hundred pages of all (--) And he only used about ten percent of it. [I: Right] But that's the way I do things. It's you know. [I: Umhm] But, and uh, I don't know. I know what I want to do, I don't know if I can.

I: What's that?

R: Write.

I: That sounds terrific.

R: Yeah, but I don't think I can do it. I can write a letter. [I: Laughs] I can write you a, I can write you a business letter that if they didn't know, I swear to God, I'm telling you I can do it! I don't know how. Um (--)

I: What do you want to write? Fiction or sociology?

R: Yeah, yeah. [I: Fiction?] I'm not qualified to write. I'd have to go back to school to write history. I'd really like to do that, but I have to go back to school, so I won't.

I: You should join our reading group. We're going to be reading (--)

R: I'm a slow reader, I can't believe it.

I: Fiction about work. This is like fifty pages. One of the books you already read. It's the thing you reviewed. Uh, [first name unclear] Maynard's book.

R: Oh yeah, I read that though. It was interesting. It was uh, [I: yeah] yeah it was [unclear].

I: Well we've got a bunch of books like that.

R: Yeah.

I: A lot of them are fiction about work.

R: Yeah?

I: Yeah. It might give you some ideas about how to think about (--) Ah, okay. Well, yeah we have a little bit more. Is there anything you would like to add to this?

R: About what?

I: About anything.

R: Oh, I don't know.

I: Anything you want to put on tape for posterity.

R: Oh. I don't know. Um, it's um, the one thing that has amazed me and I think, I've always thought of myself as, not terribly now though, but at least occasionally I could figure things out. Is Ronald Reagan and I haven't said much about him, but one, he still mystifies me. The man is not stupid. I suppose, I mean if you put him on you know, a human intelligency, obviously, I don't know, did he go to college?

I: Yeah, yeah. Yoricka (--)

R: In the days when it really meant something too.

I: Yoricka College.

R: Even you know, so he has to have a moderate amount of intelligence, but how he could still (--)